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AUTHOR Keyes, Maureen W.; Udvari-Solner, Alice
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ABSTRACT

This paper offers selected stories shared by building principals and central-office staff as they began to chronicle their personal and professional journeys toward inclusive schools for children. For the study, 17 principals (5 high school, 2 middle school, 10 elementary) and 3 central-office staff participated. The data were collected through in-depth interviews using an open-ended protocol, and the taped sessions were transcribed, reviewed, and analyzed. The themes that emerged included promoting inclusive practices, creating a supportive environment for critiques, building capacity for trust, promoting a school-wide philosophy and climate of acceptance, encouraging risk taking, fostering confirmation of self, stimulating critiques, expressing and extending personal values, using reflective dialogue and critical questioning, creating constancy of purpose, promoting specific curricular and instructional approaches, revealing incongruities in practice and philosophy, translating belief into practice, and developing creative finances. Overall, principals supported, facilitated, and actualized inclusive environments for students in many creative ways. Positive forms of influence that involved clarifying, coordinating, and communicating a unified purpose were more evident than displays of formal authority to promote change. Administrators shared their need for support and power as they reallocated both human and financial resources. (Contains 25 references and the semi-structured interview protocol.) (RJM)

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Running head: CHRONICLES OF ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP

"Chronicles of Administrative Leadership Toward Inclusive Reform: We're on the train and we've left the station, but we haven't gotten to the next stop":

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Maureen W. Keyes

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Alice Udvari-Solner

University of Wisconsin-Madison

M Keyes

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in Montreal, Canada, April 23, 1999.

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The Importance of Administrative Leadership in Establishing and Maintaining Inclusive Education

Effective leadership is a critical component in the development and nurturance of successful inclusive school communities (Keyes, 1996; MacKinnon & Brown, 1994; Rossman, 1992; Servatius, Fellows & Kelly, 1992; Stainback & Stainback, 1991; Villa & Thousand, 1990; Villa, Thousand, Meyers, & Nevin, 1996). Exhortatory lists containing directives for administrators are plentiful. Examples of these inventories have been shared suggesting the need for more demonstrative evidence from principals working to eventuate inclusive schools. However, the number of case studies and practical examples of effective leadership are sparse.

Morgan and Demchak (1996) and Schaffner and Buswell (1996) defined critical elements for successful inclusive programming, offering lists that contain key recommendations, many of which implicate the prerequisites of solid and committed administrative leadership. Their endorsements included strong leadership, knowledge of the change process, respect for and acknowledgment of success and challenge, and the need for a common articulated philosophy and strategic plans to implement inclusive practice, that include staff development opportunities and considerations for creative configurations of resources. Shinsky (1992) and Whitaker (1997) offered recommendations that echoed this advice, along with the added dimensions of administrators who model behaviors of caring, service, and acceptance of others.

Lists such as these offer many worthwhile directives and serve as skeletal templates for administrators to measure their efforts. Yet, inventories of recommendations without examples of situations or real-life challenges to demonstrate administrators' commitment to reform status

quo practices fall short of providing direction and support for those in the throes of the systems change.

Perhaps more exhaustive illustrations of effective leadership could have provided direction to the middle school administration that Fox and Yselldyke (1997) described in their case study entitled in part, "Lessons from a negative example" (p. 81). These authors summarized the critical component of effective school change as active support of the principal and shared this observation: "The principal provided support but did not actively lead the process. He said he had other priorities" (p. 91) . In summarizing from the lessons learned, Fox and Ysseldyke recommended administrators: "Provide the staff with active leadership from people who believe in or, at least, are really open to inclusion" (p. 95). In addition, when describing the need for effective staff development, Fox and Yselldyke recommended direct involvement by building principals. Underlining these results, Trump and Hange (1996) interviewed 48 teachers about their impressions of inclusive education efforts. The results of these interviews indicated that administrative leadership was considered either the greatest support or the greatest obstacle to the institution and spread of inclusive schooling efforts.

With staff continually citing administrative support as pivotal in terms of inclusive schooling reform, it is paramount that effective administrators share their efforts with those in similar situations. This paper offers selected stories shared by building principals and central office staff as they began to chronicle their personal and professional journeys toward inclusive schools for children. The analysis and distillation of interview data provides the readers a glimpse into 17 schools. The manner in which these administrators were chosen and the data were collected is described, followed by examples of effective administrative behaviors to

support the development and ongoing support for inclusive schools. In conclusion, we briefly examine the challenges still facing these administrators and invite administrators to share their stories with the authors

The Process to Chronicle Inclusive Administrative Leadership

Initially, we planned on chronicling the development of one inclusive school that exemplified all aspects of inclusion with one comprehensive case study. As we began discussions over the selection of such a site, we realized that each of our candidate schools had unique conditions worthy of examination. Furthermore, we were cognizant of the fact that no school, to our knowledge, had reached the so-called pinnacle of inclusive practice. Many schools were engaged in dramatic evolutionary change, guided by effective and committed administrators. Therefore, we identified 17 administrators of inclusive schools and three supportive central office administrators in two Midwestern cities. The administrators chosen to participate in this research were well aware of the evolution toward inclusive practices, as illustrated in the quote taken from the interview transcripts: "We're on the train and we've left the station, but we haven't gotten to the next stop". The responses from administrators verified that good inclusive practice was still " a work in progress" in most schools.

When developing our list of inclusive schools and administrators, we based our decisions on our direct involvement within these schools, our observations of instructional practices in various schools, and informal interviews with teachers and families throughout the two Midwestern districts. Interesting exemplars of specific actions or approaches employed by administrators emerged that prompted efforts to effectively include all students. The focus of our research efforts quickly took shape, as we realized that a collective of these individual stories

may have universal applications and associations for staff members of other schools engaged in inclusive reform.

Therefore, our goal became the continual unveiling of principals' knowledge through narrative. Stories are a natural form that we as educators, administrators, and reseachers use to construct expressions of our practice. Each person's storytelling is a unique representation of his or her experience and circumstances. Olson (1997) stated, "Stories are told in order to have the teller's stance understood by himself or herself, and others as well and to get validation for having chosen to act in a certain way or to find out what could have been done to make the situation more meaningful and/or useful" (p. 19). Narrative authority or voice plays an important role in reconstructing educational practices by acknowledging and honoring the validity of lived experience. The telling and hearing of stories are powerful means to help us understand and interpret the past, live in and define the present, and envision our future.

The Selection of Participants and Data Collection

The development of this research became a collaborative endeavor among the authors and 20 administrators from two large Midwestern school districts. The process of gathering the contributions and perspectives of the principals and central office staff resulted in a rare opportunity to engage in reflection, celebration, and community-building through story-telling, as transformative action began for all participants.

17 principals and three central office staff participated in this research: five high school principals, two middle school principals, ten elementary school principals and of the three central office staff, an assistant deputy superintendent, a director of Special Services, and a director of Teaching and Learning. The selection of the 20 participants was determined through nomination.

We as authors asked the simple question, "Can you identify an administrator who has been instrumental in shaping inclusive practice in your school or district?" of university personnel, parents, teachers, and administrators. As the names of the same administrators were offered repeatedly by constituents and peers, the selection was made. By soliciting nominations from both a mid-sized urban area (est. population 250,000) and a larger urban area (est. population 1,000,000), we intended to capture realistic representations of the challenges facing administrators from both a metropolitan and a large urban school district.

The data for this project were collected through in-depth interviews using an open-ended protocol. The participants were invited to either one half day or one evening retreat in their respective communities. The retreats were designed not only to gain insight into the participants' experiences but were conducted to acknowledge and honor their contributions toward systemic change. The forum of the meetings included the following data collection strategies:

1. Reflection and writing time were arranged for participants to organize their thoughts in response to the questions that guided interviews and discussions. Some individuals jotted hand written notes, while others responded using laptop computers. These narrative responses served to clarify, expand, and corroborate information gathered from interviews.

2. Small group and individual interviews were conducted by the authors, doctoral students, or project facilitators, all of whom were familiar with methods of qualitative data collection. Each interview was audio taped, and in some cases a second interviewer monitored the recording and developed a descriptive summary of the exchange.

3. Focus group discussions with multiple participants culminated the gatherings. These group discussions allowed for elaboration of concepts, identification of common themes, and

networking regarding specific issues and challenges among the administrators. Table 1 represents the primary questions used to guide the interviewers. Despite this list of questions, interviewers were encouraged to use the protocol loosely so that administrators could lead or pursue personally important elements through narrative. It was acceptable if some responses strayed from the original question(s) because our goal was to capture their accounts in a meaningful manner.

Insert Table 1 Here

Data Analysis

The audio tapes of the small-group, individual, and focus group interviews were transcribed verbatim for review and analysis. The hand written notes and typed responses of participants were matched with corresponding interview transcripts for a supportive record. We reviewed all the transcriptions and coded them individually. The first round of coding was employed to identify themes and examples that corresponded with essential leadership behavior and theoretical orientations represented in the research literature. In addition, transcripts were reviewed for unique representations of practice not typically depicted in the literature base. We then compared and negotiated identified codes. Narratives that particularly exemplified key themes were selected as archetypes for inclusion in the manuscript.

To ensure validity and trustworthiness, member checks of the transcripts and information included in the manuscript were conducted by asking the various interviewers and a sampling of interviewees to read the documents. The interviewers were asked to verify that the content

represented the interaction and dialogue that had taken place during the interview. Specific participants who were represented through quotes or depicted in narratives were asked to review transcripts and our interpretations for correctness and responsible portrayals. Once a draft of this paper was written, representative administrators from both geographic areas were given an opportunity to read it and offer feedback.

Stories From the Field: Promoting Inclusive Practices

The premise for this research and the development of the questions that guided dialogue with administrators were based on the theoretical framework advanced by Reitzug (1994), entitled, "A Developmental Taxonomy of Empowering Principal Behavior". In this section, Reitzug's theoretical framework is presented, and its relationship to the various themes and stories that emerged from the data, including quotes or narratives from specific participants, is established.

Reitzug's Developmental Taxonomy of Empowering Principal Behavior included three specific types of administrative traits that engendered leadership toward school reform. Empowerment was the overarching attribute of effective administrative leadership behavior in this theoretical model. Empowerment in this context referred to the unleashing the power of staff, students, and parents to create and shape their own futures (Sage & Burrello, 1994). Reitzug's research identified support, facilitation, and possibility as vehicles by which leaders promoted empowerment.

The first element of the framework, support, is defined as the way that the principal "creat(es) a supportive environment for critique" (Reitzug, 1994, p. 291). The second element, facilitation, refers to the ways that administrators stimulate teachers' thinking to reconsider their

ideas or their pat responses to challenging situations from a different perspective. The final element is possibility, which Reitzug defined as "giving voice by actualizing products of critique" (p. 291). Reitzug listed the examples of tangible resources such as money and equipment and intangible resources such as time and opportunity that provide the means by which to bring about change. Each element and its defining characteristics are identified in Table 2. In the following sections, chronicles from various administrators are shared to exemplify effective attributes of leadership reflected in Reitzug's model. The interview excerpts and narrative anecdotes may help nudge others on similar journeys to "the next stop."

Insert Table 2 Here

Support: Creating a Supportive Environment for Critique

Creating schools that are inclusive often requires administrators to engender an environment in which members begin to question the status quo. Administration and faculty must critically examine the ways in which certain groups of students are either excluded or included in the learning community. To begin this process of critical analysis, members engaged in and affected by the reform effort must feel a sense of support for their actions (Sergiovanni, 1994). Creating such an environment entails providing the conditions that enable teachers and students to feel psychologically and emotionally safe to express themselves. Establishing trust, promoting a school-wide philosophy of acceptance, encouraging risk-taking, and fostering confirmation of self were recurring themes expressed by these administrators that helped to establish supportive environments.

Building capacity for trust. The director of Special Education Services in the large urban district described her earlier years as an principal of an elementary school that had segregated programs for children with disabilities and for those labeled "gifted and talented". Those labeled gifted and talented were enrolled in the district's program for academically talented (PAT . She described how she built a level of trust with parents, teachers, and children as she worked to both dismantle the segregated programs and develop an inclusive model:

> I started talking to parents who were then just absolutely adamant about not having their child [with gifts and talents] mixed in with anybody else. I kept saying, 'I guarantee you that your child will not lose anything and if we can't keep that promise to you, then you can certainly remove your child and take your child out.' I will never forget this one little boy (one who had been enrolled in the self-contained special education program for children with emotional disturbance) who had been the worst in terms of behavior and noncompliance. When he received Mrs.Waterly [as his instructor], she was one of the intermediate PAT people and an excellent teacher—he said, 'Wow, well finally I'm going to learn something.' We went through a lot of redefining. I had consulting teachers come in and we had a lot of inservices. We talked about expectations that the PAT teachers had. [We talked about] the strategies that they used and how to use some of those strategies or break those same strategies down so that they applied to a whole class. I had a staff that trusted me in a sense, that followed me. I worked as hard as they did, and we got in there and we said, 'This is what you need and we're going to try to do this.' And it worked, it worked! It was a difficult year. It was a difficult year for parents. It was a difficult year for the staff. And it was a difficult year for me. But after that first year, I think that

people will tell you now they would never go back to the way it was.

The preceding excerpt from the interview transcripts emphasized the commitment made by the administrator to respect the parents' fears and reluctance when a change was imminent. Trust was established in part because the concerns of the parents were solicited and acknowledged. In this instance, trust was maintained with teachers because the principal provided the resources and strategies necessary to initiate the change in practice.

A newly hired principal in the metropolitan district, organized new social events and maintained customs unique to her school's culture, thereby contributing to an atmosphere of trust:

> Providing teachers with [social] opportunities to get together was essential. We started Wednesday morning breakfasts at [our school] and it has been well attended since the first week of school. Carrying out all of the 'traditions' of [the school] was something I held dear to my heart. [The staff] used to have roof top barbecues and secret outings which I continue to support. I think keeping the rituals assures comfort that many need and helps to establish the trust needed to create change.

Promoting a school-wide philosophy and climate of acceptance among staff and students. Approximately 140 students choose to attend an alternative citywide public high school in the metropolitan region; many of these students are marginalized or alienated from the traditional city high schools or could be considered nontraditional learners. An atmosphere of acceptance is fostered by explicit attention to policy and practice in the learning environment. The principal described that "the atmosphere in which you learn is as important as what you learn". As a steward of this philosophy, he says students "leave their labels at the door" and learn in an

environment that stresses the following:

> The mission is to create a harassment-free learning environment where all people, regardless of previous academic performance, family background, socioeconomic-economic status, beliefs, abilities, appearance, gender or sexual orientation are respected. It is a school where all students are encouraged to take academic and social risks. Curriculum and personalized instruction are multicultural as well as challenging. A strong sense of community exists in which students are asked to participate in school decision-making. Fundamental to the schools' philosophy are viewing the student as a whole person and strengthening the connection between the student, family, and community.

The principal described: " We don't recognize the label or use the label. We treat the kid as a whole while recognizing learning style differences. These personal differences are respected, whether these differences are cross dressing, purple hair, you can't write and need to dictate to others, or you have depression issues."

A non-harassment policy that incorporates this language of respect for individual differences is formally taught as part of the required high school curriculum and is enforced by administration, staff, and students. In Shabazz I , a class in which all students must enroll, scenarios involving responses to multicultural, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and disability issues are brought to the forefront. Conflict resolution is presented in tandem with these issues. Regular school meetings and half day workshops on such topics as homophobia, unlearning racism, and respect are jointly planned and facilitated by staff and students.

The principal believes that everyone must "be visible" in the daily life of the school and that their rights and needs must be reflected in the school's policies and improvement plans. The

tenets of acceptance and respect are further reinforced in his suggestions for interactions between teachers and students:

> The first thing I tell substitutes who enter this building is: 'Don't **tell** anybody to do anything, but if you **ask** a kid at this school, they will bend over backwards to help you out.' Personal relationships are incredibly important. [Students] will do things based on a relationship [with] a teacher, not based on an assignment. Unless the students are actively involved [in the relationship], they will not respond.

At the elementary level, one principal has employed a simple but powerful strategy to change the climate in her school. She is the principal of the school that serves as the primary base for students in transitional living arrangements. Students enroll at the school often with little or no notice; some remain for a day, and others remain for months. The dynamic nature of these families' living arrangements challenges both students and staff to develop meaningful connections with these children. The principal tries to guard against feelings of exclusion by using formal strategies to welcome any new student:

> We started a [custom] called First Friends. Fourth graders are [taught how to be] tour guides and buddies to new students as they come into the building. The new students are interviewed and are given a tour of the building from the perspective of a school mate. Their picture and the personal information they would like to share are posted on a hallway bulletin board. [During their first week,] they receive a coupon to have lunch with the principal and be read to by the librarian. Each classroom teacher has been encouraged to develop welcoming activities that include assigning a classmate who has the express responsibility to help the new student learn the ropes.

Exiting or leaving the school community also is viewed as an important event within this school community. When departures can be predicted, students engage in various processes of leave taking such as visiting specific teachers, collecting signatures and addresses in an autograph book. When students depart unexpectedly to unknown destinations, teachers ask students in their classrooms to write farewell letters to "send off" their classmates and thuse promote a sense of academic, emotional and social closure.

Encouraging risk-taking. Two elementary school principals from the large urban school district described the importance of modeling risk-taking in their own actions. These administrators conveyed a message that working toward one's goal may entail mistakes and challenges:

> They watch us take a lot of risks. They watch us as we model it. And articulate it. I have three teachers who were formerly paraprofessionals (paras). And I encouraged them to take a risk and go back to college and get their teaching degree. I told them,
>
> 'If you're here to collect a paycheck, forget it. We have to work and keep abreast of the best practices. I expect you to go to conferences too. I encourage you. I want you to have discussions' [about what you learned].

The other principal responded:

> The people on our staff realize that the operative word is work. You're always in the process. You're always trying to get to a place [that] you will never get to. If we're trying to have schools for the 21st Century, then we've got to be ready. Sometimes we win, and sometimes we lose and go back to the drawing board and say, 'Okay, let's rethink this. This is what we thought parents wanted, this is what we thought would

work, and it's not really doing that. What do we need to do next? So the whole group sort of problem solves around those kind of issues together. We really try to figure out where we need to go next. So it's a process, and it will always be a process.

Fostering confirmation of self. Administrators talked about the challenges of supporting inclusive reform and inserted the critical role that recognition of both student and staff effort plays in its success. Leaders praised, formally acknowledged contributions, shared authority, and promoted responsibility in decision making. These public and private confirmations of ability and value appeared to promote cohesive actions toward inclusive ends.

Support for the personal growth and contribution by teaching assistants or paras was discussed by two elementary school principals from the large urban district at length in terms of explaining effective inclusive programming for students:

> In our building, paras are [treated as] teachers. They are not there to run off copies, they are not secretaries, they are not peons, they are not there to do outside duties. They have lots of skills. As a matter of fact, in the seven years since these programs have been opened, we have had ten paras who [have become] teachers. We were able to hire them when we opened up the new program. They went back to school and now they are on staff with us. So these are folks who have a real knowledge base about what this program really looks like. But one of the other things they do well is to help us with the parent involvement piece. Because they are part of the teams that do home visits and they are good home visitors. They do the whole works.

A sense of empowerment for students is promoted at the metropolitan alternative high school described earlier through instruction and dialogue about personal learning styles. The

principal provided this account:

> The notion is that every kid understands himself as a learner. So, they [say], 'I need information presented **this** way, not **that** way or I am a physical learner'. You hear them talking about themselves in that [manner]. You hear them use the language. They become proactive in their own [education]. They put pressure on teachers [to respond when they say], 'I need information presented this way, you can't just tell me...I need to see it.'

Facilitation: Stimulating Critique

Once a school community develops a supportive atmosphere conducive to critique; staff members scrutinize both their individual actions and their role within the micropolitical milieu. The ways in which leaders encourage others to review, critique, and question the context and culture of their schools are critically important. The manner by which administrators facilitated the growth of inclusive practices included expressing personal values, using reflective dialogue and critical questioning, creating constancy of purpose, promoting specific curricular and instructional approaches, and revealing incongruities in practice and philosophy.

Expressing and extending personal values. Blase and Kirby suggested that expectations for changes in attitudes and behavior are "largely derived from [the administrator's] personal values regarding appropriate human interaction and school purposes (1992, p. 24). These administrators did not just parrot district initiatives and goals; they disclosed their own personal visions, belief systems, and basic assumptions about living. In doing so, moral purposes and alternative frameworks for thinking about teaching and learning were extended to the teaching staff.

The director of teaching and learning in the metropolitan district (former middle school principal) articulated the importance of an administrator expressing values and providing critical resources to actualize practice:

> Purposeful inclusion was the expectation, and I think that this was made explicit in a variety of ways. Elimination of tracking was one way. Emphasizing that one of our responsibilities was to challenge all of our students in heterogeneously grouped classroom was another way. This was a clear value that was frequently communicated. We talked specifically about inclusion in faculty meetings and elicited ideas from staff that were boiled down into a one-pager that remained in the teacher handbook for many years and was entitled: 'What does an inclusive classroom look like?' and 'How do you get there?' This was also a value around which we made decisions. I decided that the most significant things that I could do administratively were to maintain the smallest classes possible, deal administratively with student behaviors that negatively affected learning, and cheerlead.

It is difficult to assess how and to what extent the philosophy and values of an administrator permeate a school's culture. Sometimes, if there are positive relationships with staff who hold similar values, a new reality is created. In our interviews, we were struck by the pervasive appearance of these values and belief statements when no direct interview questions on the topic had been posed. The following quotations are representative of the value statements that made their way into our conversations:

> When I think of inclusive education, I think of effective, seamless practices for all children, those with special education labels, English as a second language label

or whichever other labels there are out there. My question to my staff and to myself is always, 'Is this how I would want my own child to be educated? Is this the kind of school I would want my own child to attend?' I continually have a sense of urgency for all the children at our school, to provide the best possible instruction that will allow them to be readers, writers, and mathematicians. I feel it [is] a social responsibility we have undertaken.

Whatever the problem is that comes to me --I do not just respond to resolve the issue. Instead, I try to figure out how can we solve this problem, keeping in mind that this may be an opportunity to expand the way we think about serving kids.

I have come to understand the importance of the learning cycle rather than the teaching cycle. The idea is that you assess, then plan, then evaluate what you have planned based upon what you see children have learned --and then you do it all over again. The reason [why] you do all of this is for learning, not for teaching...the teacher is not the center of this; it's the child.

[As] a core belief, I think that it is only in an inclusive environment, where there are multiple perspectives, that human dignity and human creativity flourish.

I have not yet encountered anything that has made my commitment to inclusive practices falter. And often it is that commitment that resonates in the core of my being and allows

me not to give in to staff demands or influences. It encourages me to stand fast and strong when resources are tight and pressure is fierce. Often that commitment is brought forth when staff indicate that a student 'really doesn't belong' in a classroom. I feel outraged because that feels like exclusion. Any sort of exclusion causes me to remain steadfast in my goal to include all people in all ways. The obstacles I frequently meet are based, in my opinion, upon a person's skill level. I am challenged by knowing that I need to meet a person 'where they are' and bring them from that place forward --even though [that place] may be far way from where I want them to be.

I guess the most important thing I can do is be an advocate by voicing my opinion, modeling and letting teachers know about best practices, and [by continuing to ask] myself the same question when I am not sure about what to do, 'Is this in the best interest of the child?' I have a desire to be an advocate for equality, regardless of age, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, ability, gender, and anything else I forgot. It's part of my vision for justice.[For example,] I had a conversation with a new [staff member] at our school. She said she did not believe in inclusion because it doesn't work for everyone. Some kids are too distracted, some are too noisy, some are too disruptive. I think she was missing the point of inclusion. To have inclusion, the community must be built first. The classroom needs to become a family, and, as in any healthy family setting nobody gets excluded because they don't fit in correctly. If families across the country live with these children in their homes, then why should they be excluded in the classroom?

Using reflective dialogue and critical questioning. One of the most important ways that

a principal can engender an atmosphere for school reform is by stimulating inquiry for him or herself, and among teachers and students. Questioning to promote reflection has been identified as a critical feature of administrative and teacher practice to frame problems and determine alternative courses of action (Liston & Zeichner; 1986, 1991; Shön, 1983, 1987; Udvari-Solner, 1996). An elementary school principal articulated her practices in this regard:

> My job is to look at individual children, look at the service delivery system in my school, and then ask the tough questions that will promote questioning and discussion. What are we doing as a school to meet the needs of all children, whatever their strengths and needs? Are our practices, in other words, what we teach and how we teach, effective for our children? Are we using our resources in the most effective way possible for children? What kind of paradigm shifts do we need to make to meet the needs of our children? These are the tough questions that I know are hard to answer. [These are the questions] that people may have to take a leap to answer and may not be able to answer. It's my job to ask the questions whatever the answers may be. I may not always like the answers, and sometimes I anticipate the answers to be very different. [However,] I want to plant the seeds of doubt. I want people to begin to think about things differently. That is how I see change coming about. It allows change to come about in a more natural fashion rather than mandating it and dictating it and saying, 'This is the way it is going to be.'

This critical questioning was instrumental in beginning a shift from a segregated early childhood program to inclusive service delivery for students with disabilities. The principal recalled:

> [Our school] had an early childhood program that ran as a separate entity. Now, think

> about this--we had eight kindergartens, and then we had a separate early childhood kindergarten program with ten or so five-year-olds. I kept asking the early childhood kindergarten teacher, 'Why are the children educated separately? We are a primary center, why do we have children who are educated outside of the eight kindergartens that we have at our school?' I remember the early childhood teacher looking at me and saying, 'Well, I don't know, and I don't like it.' I said, 'Well then we have to do something about it.' Out of that conversation, after a year of conversation, we now have a team-taught kindergarten [that includes students with disabilities] and no longer have a separate early childhood program.

This principal's approach, as she described it, was to "pose the tough questions" whenever issues of team teaching and inclusion came up:

> Before team-taught classrooms came about we had some very lengthy discussions. [Discussions] about simple things like, 'How do you feel about having a roommate?' Essentially, you are getting a roommate. So, how do you feel about sharing a room, having somebody else's desk in that room, and their stuff, and their mess? What are you going to do the first time there is a behavior problem in the classroom? Who is going to do the disciplining? Who is going to make the phone call home? How are you going to decide that? During planning time, do you co-plan? How many weekdays a week are you going to co-plan? How many days are you going to go separately and plan? Who will teach what learning groups? Those are the kinds of discussions that need to take place. The message [behind those questions] was that I was not going to allow [one person] to act as an educational assistant in this classroom and the other person, the teacher.

Creating constancy of purpose: Linking the tenets of inclusive education to other school-wide reforms and priorities. Based on assessments of students, building practices, and self-evaluations another elementary school principal began extensive school wide restructuring by engaging her staff in a process of setting goals. The result was the following building priorities that centered broadly around learning and increasing achievement:

1. Raising the achievement levels of all students in reading and writing.

2. Coordinating the curriculum to ensure sensible learning progressions in sequence, content, and processes within and between grade levels and to bring teachers into similar instructional orientations.

3. Building a sense of community by promoting safety and peace.

4. Fostering partnerships with parents.

5. Attending to the number and types of transitions that interfered with or facilitated learning for students.

The principal believed that developing consensus in setting these priorities was a necessary precursor to guide decision-making about changes in practice. These shared goals also gave direction with regard to how she and her staff spent their time and money. She emphasized that these collective priorities were aligned with and promoted inclusive principles. She underscored the important role of the principal to help make explicit these connections for people--that is, how implementing national reforms or district initiatives advance a building priority or how building priorities inherently interact with and influence one another. For example, establishing methods in her school for positive conduct and safety clearly influenced the climate that would promote all children learning to read. When examining the priority that

targeted learning transitions. She recalled:

> We looked at the number of transitions that students and staff were making, and we realized the people who were least able to make transitions smoothly were the people who were making the most transitions. The number of transitions also caused us to have less profitable learning time.

This realization prompted discussion and action regarding how and when students identified with disabilities received specialized assistance. The overarching goal to reduce unnecessary transitions for all students bolstered the rationale and practice of maintaining instruction in general education settings for students with disabilities. The principal concluded by describing " the single biggest contribution I made [wa]s constancy of purpose, continuing to hold up the priorities that we established as the direction we were going [and] then asking how what we are trying to do relates to what we said we are all about."

A high school principal in the large urban district discussed the importance of clear direction too:

> Well, I think one major thing to me is to always pay attention to the system and the structure that you are dealing with. Don't worry about individual people or their beliefs. Don't focus on trying to have all of the right people in the right places, because you won't make it. There are too many variables you can't control. So, if you develop a structure in the building that promotes what you are looking for with such things as having time for people to meet with each other, having collaboration, having learning teams of teachers across all disciplines including the special education teachers on those learning teams, [then] you will see change. You have to just pay constant attention to the system to see

where and how that system can be set up to get people collaborating, talking with each other, sharing ideas, focusing on student growth, [and] developing alternative assessments.

Promoting specific curricular and instructional approaches. Administrators described the importance of new ways to teach that are extended to all children as essential in developing successful inclusive outcomes. An emphasis on literacy education, cooperative and partner learning, multi-age grouping, service learning, peer mediation and schoolwide responses to conflict resolution were approaches that were repeatedly endorsed by the participants.

The principal in one of the urban inclusive elementary schools described the implementation of a schoolwide social skills program as a critical component to successful inclusive programming for children with behavioral challenges. She explained how the program, *Stop and Think* teaches children how to assess conflicts by considering one of three options: ignoring, talking it over with the person, or enlisting the help of another adult. She described the way in which special education staff brought their expertise to general educators in helping to develop a school wide program to promote positive behavior:

> We [attended] an inservice called *Second Step*. We carried over [special education strategies] to our [general] education program and we saw tremendous difference in the social behaviors of [all of] our children. [Note: Second Step is a program designed to provide prosocial skill instruction to an entire school body.] We started our own program which [we] called Stop and Think. That was tremendously successful on the playground, in the hallway, and in the classrooms. [As a staff, we began] talking about dealing with crisis, anger management, and problem-solving [in consistent ways].

Two principals of large urban inclusive schools shared successes with the practice of looping, in which teachers keep the same students in their classrooms for two or three academic years in order to develop continuity in programming. In addition to looping, one of these two schools maintains an extended calendar year, another solution developed jointly by staff and administrators to solve many of the problems encountered when developing inclusive educational programming that is responsive to unique learning challenges.

Revealing incongruities in practice and philosophy. Administrators talked about the importance of confronting staff and asking for clarification when practices and philosophies do not mesh. In effect, administrators used their actions and questions as a "springboard for the analysis" (Reitzug, 1994, p. 299) of the relationship between actions and beliefs, as expressed in the cliche', walk the talk .

One urban high school principal described a problem-solving session with a group of students and their teacher. This principal uses much of the *Total Quality Management* (TQM) approach in her work. Her administrative style asserts the critical role played between beliefs and actions. In the following dialogue, she shared an example of how she extended this work into the classroom:

> I'm working with this one math class right now that had a 40% failure rate and it is a mixed bag of kids, a mixture of special ed., [general] ed., --you know, a medium level math class-- and we tried a different approach. [I] went in and said, 'There's a 40% failure rate in this class and this doesn't make any sense.' I used the story about how people don't wake up and come to school wanting to fail. Teachers don't get up and decide to come and do the worst job possible. It doesn't make any sense for me to spend

time yelling at the teacher and saying that the person must be a lousy teacher or yelling at kids. Let's figure out what we can do about this failure rate. 'Does anyone want to do this?' So, students agreed and set a failure rate target in the second quarter at 10%. Then we worked with various quality tools from TQM to develop solutions. I did a check with them this morning, halfway through the quarter and they're at a 15% failure rate right now. [They reported] that they were being held accountable during the school day, during that class to demonstrate that they knew something, so they [had] better listen, they [had] better take notes, [and] they had better pass these tests.

An elementary school principal described her philosophy to develop solutions to challenges as she encouraged alternative resolutions to issues:

I personally grappled with whole school management issues [during my first year] and found that teachers expected the principal to do much of the [behavior] management. So, when management issues presented themselves, I tried to ask teachers, ' Whose job is it really?' When a teacher complained to me that she didn't like the way a fifth grade student was running in the hall, I said, '[W]hose job is it to stop him from running?' The response to this question was '[I]t's mine, if I saw him.' The teacher acknowledged that it was difficult and scary to do. [My feeling is] that's okay, let it be hard and scary to do, but I need to know that you know it's your responsibility. [I have tried] to instill that it's everyone's responsibility for management, it's everyone's responsibility for how people behave in our general environments, hallways, lunch rooms, bathrooms, at recess, and in the library. If we believe that everyone belongs to the school and we are all

> part of the school, then we are all responsible for managing the school. [This has] caused me to change my practice. I do not want teachers to think that sending the student to me is an adequate solution. I want teachers to see themselves as part of the problem-solving process and part of the [process of] providing the consequences.

Possibility: Actualization and Products of Critique

The final aspect of Reitzug's (1994) framework of empowering leadership behavior is possibility, in other words, how do administrators actualize a school environment that supports the tenets of inclusive education for staff and students. The decision to act on one's commitment to inclusive programming was described as pivotal by all interviewees. Examples from the featured research included translating belief into practice by engaging parents and teachers in developing responsive activities, developing creative financial resources, and keeping friends in high places.

Translating belief into practice. Moving from an expressed philosophy to daily practice requires that administrators make definitive and practical decisions regarding instructional organization. The director of teaching and learning related an instance that required her to make significant changes in class configurations and equitable school offerings to rectify tracking practices that unintentionally had excluded groups of students when she was a middle school principal:

> At each grade level the school had general math and enriched math classes. I believed that this was substantively, practically, and symbolically wrong. Substantively, tracking students in mathematics (and thus often skewing the other classes into tracked classes as

well) made no sense if we believed that all students could learn (i.e., no one had a "math gene") and wanted all students to eventually be able to do the same things -- e.g., take algebra by tenth grade. If that was the belief and the goal, we needed to offer all students access to the same educational opportunities. Practically, when we tracked, classes became racially and socio-economically identifiable and lower track classes often became more difficult to manage. Symbolically, who would want general math if an enriched math [class] were available. So, at the beginning of my third year at the school, we eliminated general mathematics courses. This was another top down decision, though it was widely anticipated. Teachers had over a semester of warning and were given release time to prepare. In addition, they adopted a new textbook to support the heterogeneously grouped instruction. During the first year of implementation, teams of teachers had additional release time to develop materials to support differentiation as well as cooperative, open-ended, and investigative activities in mathematics. At this same time, teachers were very engaged in infusing the NCTM [National Council of the Teachers of Mathematics] standards into their classroom mathematics instruction. This significantly supported inclusion because students were expected to be engaged in complex mathematical thinking. Being good at computation was not a prerequisite.

An elementary school principal described a creative method that she and her staff developed to help ensure more appropriate educational planning and programming for students:

We've started a process in our school called the Descriptive Review. We do it for all [students with and without special education labels,] based on teachers having difficulty figuring out what to do about any youngster's academic progress or behavioral

progress in a classroom. [We call] folks to, what we call, a Descriptive Review. They bring background information about the [student] and they talk about what they would like to have the youngster do. [Staff are encouraged to formulate a proactive statement.] It's like, 'I would like Jane to sit in her seat for 20 minutes to work with us in a cooperative group. And if that's the challenge, then everyone [shares] their perspective; everybody has a voice. [In addition] there is [an]other group of us [who] sit in on the meeting. Then we offer suggestions and recommendations [about] what they might try. So, [there is] a lot of teaming, a lot of collaboration, trying to really figure out what to do. Parents are involved too.

Another way that administrators actualized their inclusive school environments was by promoting regular home visits for all children. Two inclusive urban principals described this aspect of their program:

Home visits, [they are] so important. I had a couple [teachers who] did their first home visits this year, and they came back high as a kite. They were so [grateful that they said,] 'Thank you.' At first, they were very hesitant; but once they get out there and really get involved with those families and see the difference that home visits make, they really are enthusiastic. My parent coordinator is even making up little gifts so [that] when they go, if they have a little child, one person can be playing with the child, and the other can be talking with the parent. We have this flexible menu [as to how home visits can be carried out]. We have had teachers who have met parents and sat down for a cup of coffee. They have gone to jobs and met them for lunch, or they go after school. Because my teachers were beginning to feel they were not getting in enough home visits, we took

one of our days that we might have spent for an inservice, and we used it as a home visitation day. So, teachers and their families could conduct home visits on a Saturday. That was great. We did one in November, and we're doing another one in March just because we want to make sure that beyond parent-teacher conferences, we get another chance to talk with parents. That really was exciting to them. We also have teachers who do things like [having] an ice cream social at alocal mall. She had 34 families come in out of the 50 students, 35 adults.

Developing creative finances. Principals were creative as they sought out additional monies, reallocated existing funds and worked to meet the needs of their schools. One elementary school principal described a creative allocation of monies:

> One of the things that my staff has agreed to is [for] resources to be spent on human power, so we don't purchase text books. That's why we are ungraded; we have no textbooks. Because we don't buy textbooks, we're able to afford to have an educational assistant assigned to every one of the teachers in our building. We are allowed to make some decisions that really support our [ability] to do full inclusion; [we] have ungraded and multi-age [classrooms]. We have used our money differently [from] many others. In addition, we have spent a lot of money on staff development. There is much money spent on making sure that staff members get the information they need to develop the skills and the expertise to work in teams. We've done a lot with team building. We have done a lot with curriculum because that is also a piece that's important for us.

Other examples of seeking alternative financial support were grant writing and donations by various community agencies. In addition to actual financial products, other resources were

considered. Creative utilization of human resources was cited by all administrators. The primary reference in terms of staff distribution was the use of cross-categorical programming whereby students with special education labels were supported by a team of teachers, one of whom may or may not have the particular certification program or background to match the child's labeled disability.

Keeping friends in high places. Participants discussed the necessity of involving central office administrators in building-level decisions. One middle school administrator, described the way that she tried to enlist more cooperation:

> I think we became a real bug for central office. We were on the phone daily with central office because of the numbers [of students with support needs in our building]. We were disproportionately high [compared] with the rest of the system. What was it, 12-14% systemwide and we had 22% [of our population with identified special needs]. And so we were calling central office every day, every day.

Conclusion

In summary, principals supported, facilitated, and actualized inclusive environments for students in a multitude of creative ways. Positive forms of influence that involved clarifying, coordinating, and communicating a unified purpose (Blase & Kirby, 1992; Heck, Larson, & Marcoulides, 1990) were more evident than displays of formal authority to promote change.

Courage was a recurring theme for these administrators, the courage to relentlessly pose the difficult, the contrary, the controversial, the seemingly unanswerable questions. A deputy superintendent from the large urban district reminded us of the definitive question that administrators must have the fortitude to continually propose: "Who has the right to exclude

somebody?"

The challenge that administrators face in this time of change is a difficult one. Fullan (1993) stated that we cannot make a difference in the lives of students by playing it safe. Skilled change agents with a moral purpose are needed. Most of those with whom we spoke had a clear vision of what could be or should be, but in terms of finding their way, the road toward inclusive school communities was daunting. As one elementary school principal shared: "It is still murky territory between empowerment, decision-making, and choice."

Administrators shared their need for support and power to open the windows of opportunity to refashion their schools and reallocate both human and financial resources as collectively deemed fitting because, as we know, change comes from within. In an effort to continue compiling examples along the road toward inclusive schools, we invite administrators, teachers, community members, parents, and students to share their chronicles with us. In retelling your stories, we may collectively find ourselves at the proverbial "next stop."

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Table 1

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

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1. What led you to become an advocate for inclusive schooling practices?

2. How have you demonstrated the commitment to inclusive practices to your staff, students, parents, community, and your administrators? Can you think of strategies or practices that you purposely employed in order to advance your vision for inclusive schooling?

3. How have you supported inclusive practices on a more indirect level. For example have you made changes or decisions that influenced a caring school community/climate, shared decision making, empowerment of staff and students to make choices, etc.

4. Describe an example of support for inclusive practices beyond your school building. What have you done in your community, with families, or through policy development to promote the inclusion of all students?

5. What type/(s) of instructional or curricular practices do you promote and/or find teachers using in successful inclusive classrooms?